

Tobacco Calendar

1 9 8 5



J A N U A R Y

Burley tobacco farmers plan the year's work and share ideas.



F E B R U A R Y

Farmers plow the beds so soil can be treated and seeds sowed.



M A R C H

Beds are sowed, rolled and raked, with seeds mixed with fertilizer and spread over the soil from a cart.



A P R I L

Seeds have sprouted and weeds are removed by hand for burley and lower tobacco.



M A Y

Farm families work together to pull the now-developed alcala, against them to sow.



J U N E

Setting is completed and tobacco grows

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plants.



J U L Y

Plants are in full bloom and must be trimmed to make larger and heavier leaves.

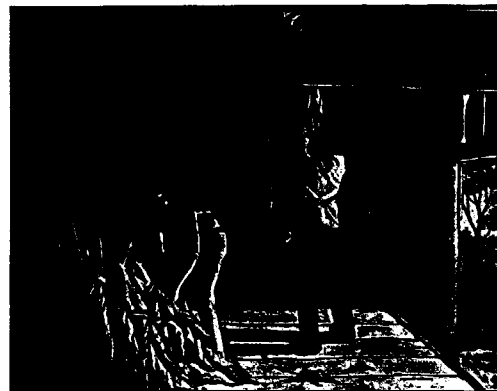


A U G U S T

Harvesting begins when ripe Burley plants have begun to yellow, with stalks impaled on spears and secured on tobacco sticks.

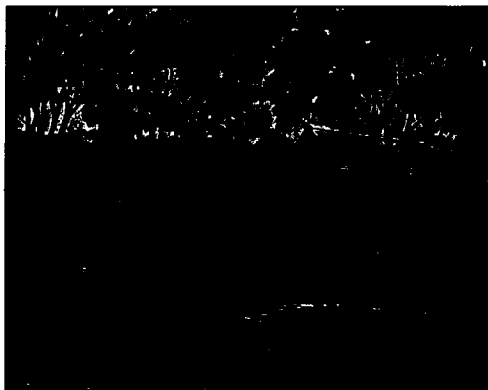


rapidly in the hot, humid summer weather.



S E P T E M B E R

Within a day or two after being cut, tobacco sticks are hung on rafters for curing.



O C T O B E R

Opening and closing barn windows and doors controls moisture in the tobacco, curing the leaf.



N O V E M B E R

Farm families gather to strip leaves by hand and sort into grades, a time of stories and companionship.



D E C E M B E R

The farmers' reward for a year's labor comes at the auction, under the watchful eyes of the growers themselves.

Adapted from "The Tobacco Industry" by John H. Johnson, 1934.



Bob Cage (far left) knocks 'em dead in Danville after winning the World Tobacco Auctioneering Championship.

Bill Monroe (right) cutting the "Mule Skinner Blues" for the crowds attending R.J. Reynolds's festival last fall.



A stately Danville mansion (center) near the fairgrounds.

Crafts (right) delighted thousands attending the tobacco festival.

DANVILLE, VA.—It was a gorgeous weekend, warm, sunny and bright by day, brisk, crisply cool by night, a perfect end to a bountiful tobacco growing season.

And when country comedian Jerry Clower bellowed out the winner of the World Tobacco Auctioneering Championship at the end of competition here Oct. 13, it seemed clear that history was repeating itself.

After all, the new champ, Bob Cage, lives just up the road in South Boston. That address makes him well nigh a neighbor to the four-year-old contest's three previous winners—Mac Burnette (1981), Page Roberts (1982), both of Clarksville, and Walker Wilkerson (1983) of Kenbridge.

Certainly it looked as though Virginia has a lock on the R.J. Reynolds-sponsored competition that regularly draws some 70 contestants from all over America's tobacco land and has brought participants from as far away as South Africa.

True, the 61-year-old Cage works today only a few miles from the farm where he grew up. However, his path between those two life-points has detoured distinctively from the traditional route to a profession born more than a century ago among the red-brick warehouses that still line cobbled streets along Dan River's south bank.

Most modern tobacco callers—they rarely refer to themselves as "auctioneers"—come from tobacco-industry families. They're kin to growers, warehousemen and buyers. They start as teenagers. In fact, some of the current crop are following directly in fatherly footsteps—among them, Mac Burnette, whose father, "Smokey Joe" Burnette, became a legend in the trade.

But Bob Cage was born with no bloodline to the business. When the time came to leave home for college—first at North Carolina's Mars Hill, then at the University of Miami, Fla.—he just kept going.

First came the Army. Then followed several years spent, in Cage's own words, "knocking around, doing everything," with no other goal than "to play tennis and chase women." In turn, that led him all the way to glamorous Southern California and a position teaching tennis and swimming at a Beverly Hills hotel.

Championship Season

Bob Cage Wins

By Antoinette W. Roades

Looking back, Cage admits that hitch constituted soft duty—the sort of situation that might snare someone for life. But before much more of this had passed fate intervened in the form of happy news: his mother remarried.

Of course, the occasion called for a trip to Virginia. And because his new step-dad owned a tobacco warehouse, Cage thought a casual visit to a sale might be a nice thing, as well. However, just minutes into the excitement of the first tobacco auction he'd ever seen, Cage—then 27—felt idle curiosity turning into intense interest. Before the day was out, he knew he was hooked.

"It was just one of those things," he says today with a smile and a what-can-you-do shrug. "I decided I wanted to be an auctioneer, and I've never looked back."

Cage did go back, though—back to California to fulfill a contract. So, instead of serving the apprenticeship typical of tobacco callers, he learned their demanding vocal dynamics in a year of "selling" dressing-room lockers to imaginary buyers and listening to tapes of the best callers at work. Then, with his new wife—also a tennis pro—he bought a one-way ticket to red-clay country.

Although he was happy at having found his niche, he wasn't about to let it become a rut. In the early '60s, he and his growing family—even-

tually two girls and a boy—moved to Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia). There, says Cage, he was able to test his talent on "the largest auction floor in the world"—a high pressure environment that served for him as a sort of graduate school of tobacco selling.

"They're much more efficient than we are," Cage says of Zimbabwean callers. "They never stop the sale"—a staggering thought: considering that even in America tobacco transactions fly almost faster than eye or ear can follow, as buyers, agents and caller move together up and down long rows of knee-high leaf-piles, each of which commands its own price.

Back in Virginia, his African adventure behind him and his skills honed, Cage again had the option of coasting comfortably. Instead, he ventured into another exotic area, one that offered a different brand of adventure—art.

At first, painting was just a hobby. Before long, though, Cage was investing the same quality of energy and imagination in his new interest as he had in auctioneering. And that investment soon began to yield professional-calibre results.

Today, Cage's artistic repertoire includes not only painting, but what he calls "wild, crazy" sculpture. And his work has yielded commissions, showings at Danville's National Tobacco-Textile Museum, and even an invitation from the Virginia Museum

of Fine Arts in Richmond to participate in one of its biennial juried exhibitions—an honor for which statewide competition is keen.

And as though all that weren't enough, the outgoing, aggressively charming Cage—who still has a Hollywoodish tendency to call people "baby"—has also proven himself an artist in the performing sense. In fact, so at ease in the spotlight was the new champ at his world-title win, that right after thanking everyone, he swung into an impromptu sampler of other callers' chants.

Beginning with the baritone railroad-train rumble of "Smokey Joe" and shifting next to tenor for a high-pitched stutter of a once-famous Carolina caller, Cage sailed through a spectrum of styles that had the audience stomping for more. Then he ended his medley with an *capella* chorus of "The Auctioneer's Song," a country classic he cut a 45 rpm record of, and his own distinctive chant—musical and elastic as the twang of a mountaineer's jews-harp.

Unrehearsed and unexpected, that mini one-man show delighted both Cage's fellow callers and the contest's 5,000-plus audience. In addition to the \$10,000 cash prize he won, a trophy, ring and tobacco-brown blazer, Cage wins a year of public appearances on behalf of R.J. Reynolds' Pride in Tobacco program.

That ambassadorial role—one more detour from life-as-usual—is an experience on which Cage is eager to embark. "I'm looking forward to giving a good name to tobacco," he says. "I want people to know there's nothing wrong with having a choice."

Certainly, Bob Cage has had his choice several times over. Yet despite the distractions and detours he enjoys so much, his decision remains today what it was 34 years ago—auctioneering tobacco. As he puts it:

"I like what I do. I like people, the money, the hours, the action. I just like to walk in and sing my own song," he croons. □

To find out more about visiting or participating in the next World Tobacco Auctioneering Championship on October 12, 1985, contact John Cousart, Public Relations, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, 401 North Main, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27102, for a free brochure.

I'm looking forward to giving a good name to tobacco,' says Bob Cage, 'I want people to know there's nothing wrong with having a choice'

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PROFILES IN COURAGE

Tobacco People Defend Their Jobs

By Adele A. Bunoski

The tobacco industry is sometimes portrayed as a sort of corporate Darth Vader by anti-smokers. But a new ad that began appearing in October from the Tobacco Industry Labor Management Committee should help change that misconception.

"We're the tobacco industry, too," a national ad now underway in five major liberal publications, attempts to personalize the tobacco industry by presenting the feelings of its union members.

The full-page ad describes the role of unionized tobacco workers in America's social movements and stresses the importance of tobacco jobs as a force in organized labor. Its aim is to make labor's traditional allies realize that tobacco workers—people who share their goals and feelings for equal rights and social justice—are the same people whose livelihoods are threatened by unfair attacks on the tobacco industry.

The ad focuses on three members of the Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers' International Union Local 203T. Among them, Phyllis Krug, Charles Pearce and Clifford Jones have more than 90 years of experience working for tobacco in Richmond, Va.

Tobacco jobs provide real income. They do, literally, make the difference between poverty and dignity for us'

"We want people to know that tobacco jobs are in the mainstream of working class life," says Wallace Mergler, chairman of the Labor Management Committee and vice president of BC&T. "Tobacco jobs provide real income. They do, literally, make the difference between poverty and dignity for us."

In fact, a study by the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Applied Research Center found more than 393,000 persons are employed full time by the tobacco industry in the U.S. Another 1.6 million jobs exist in other industries due to the ripple effect of tobacco industry operations, as tobacco workers, their employers and suppliers spend their incomes for other goods and services.

The Labor Management Committee, formed in October, will deal on a cooperative basis with issues such as job security and economic development. Other industries, including the airline and grocery businesses, have similar committees.

The ad sums up the workers' viewpoint: "We want you to know our industry is threatened—not by foreign competition or old-fashioned technology—but by well-meaning people who haven't stopped to consider how their actions might affect others."

Here's a profile of what these working people have to say about their jobs and tobacco's economic importance.

RICHMOND—"It's people, not machines, that make cigarettes," Clifford Jones points out, echoing the theme of the Tobacco Industry Labor Management Committee's new ad "We're the tobacco industry, too."

Clifford, 66, who retired in 1983 after 45 years as a machine oiler at Philip Morris here, is one of three workers pictured in the ad. He and co-workers Charles Pearce and Phyllis Krug are staunch union supporters who proudly drive the point home that the tobacco industry is really individuals who share the concerns of other U.S. workers.

Historically, its members have rallied alongside other unions in support of the Voting Rights Act, marching to strengthen Social Security, the Food Stamp Program, better health care for the elderly, supporting Solidarity, creating a national holiday in honor of Martin Luther King and many other items on the "traditional" labor agenda.

Yet too often anti-smoking forces succeed in grabbing the headlines to push their anti-smoking agenda that will hurt tobacco jobs. Where, tobacco people wonder, is the support they need in the face of these attacks?

"All of what the ad says is so true," Phyllis explains. "I feel like the anti-smokers are trying to smash out people's rights...to stomp out your lives. The work of the committee is very important to me and my family."

Phyllis, 38, started at Philip Morris straight out of high school. Her mother and step-father worked at the Richmond facility and her husband is also employed there. "I've been using tobacco money for many years," she says with a smile. "It's very close and dear to me."

Indeed, tobacco industry work is a family affair for Clifford and Charles as well. Clifford's father began work here in the early 1930s and helped him get his job. His wife Ethel still works at the plant, but will soon join him in retirement.

Charles, 57, has been president of BC&T Local 203T for the past ten years. He joined Philip Morris in 1956 as a "miscellaneous person" and was promoted to machine mechanic before becoming a union official. His brother and nephews work there, and son Andy works at the plant while attending college part-time. People tend to stay at their jobs, Charles says of the plant's two percent attrition rate, and many people—including Charles and Clifford—opt not to retire when eligible.

Clifford worked 15 years longer than required because, he says, "I just liked working... both the working conditions and the people—management and labor." From 1963 until his retirement, Clifford was a member of the union's negotiating committee. Phyllis also works with the union as shop steward.

She expresses similar satisfaction with her job as inspector, responsible for quality control on 14 machines. "When I'm down there on that floor, I'm going to try to be the best, and I've tried to reflect that onto everybody who works with me... the im-



portance of quality," she says.

"I have the satisfaction of doing what I like to do. I don't mind coming to work on Monday morning the least bit, because I know I'm going to be gratified." Phyllis is so fond of tobacco that in summer she grows six plants in her garden just to watch them bloom.

Charles, a North Carolina tobacco grower's son, prefers factory to farm because of the financial security it offers. "Farming is a roll of the dice," he says. "You can work all summer and one hail storm can come along and wipe you out."



But, Charles notes, the anti-smoking movement may prove a greater threat than any hail storm. "Let's be honest and not fool ourselves," he says. "The way the anti-smoking organizations have kicked the tobacco industry, it's becoming a political advantage to be against smoking. Somebody's got to turn it around."

The new ad may not do the job completely, Charles says, "but some people are going to think, 'These people are tired of getting kicked! It will at least let people know, 'Hey, you're talking about us.'"

The key to getting more workers active in industry support is education and participation, he believes.

BC&T Local 203T works to involve members in Philip Morris' Tobacco Action Program (TAP) by providing information at union meetings. The problem in the past, Charles says, was that workers too often were unaware of the impact that anti-tobacco measures in other areas had on their livelihoods.

"They just don't connect it... that the cigarettes we're making here are sold there. If you don't sell them, you don't need them. But I believe through programs like TAP, there are more people today aware of what's happening than ever before," he says.

Phyllis points out that people outside the industry also benefit from tobacco earnings. "As I look around my neighborhood, I see a lot of people who are involved indirectly. In Richmond, tobacco touches a lot of people. It's a ripple effect. I think these senators and anti-smokers don't realize how many people it does touch when they do what they do."

Many Richmond tobacco workers emphasize this message by marking bills and checks with a rubber stamp that reads "This is tobacco money." Phyllis recalls using the stamp at a local grocery, where the cashier mentioned that she'd start using one too, "so people will realize how much money we do put out."

Phyllis, usually camera shy, says her family was thrilled by her participation in the ad because of what it represents. "You know," she says, "when things are running along smoothly, it's real easy to sit back and not put effort toward it. But when somebody's rocking your ship, you find you're going to try to stabilize the ship. I want to do everything I can to alert people to this."

For Clifford, his presence in the ad is a capstone to his long career. "I'm proud to be a part," he concludes. "I'll be remembered by the rank and file and I'm sure they'll be saying, 'I'm glad you stood up for the tobacco industry.'"

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